

PARKING *Review*

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Bradford's parking team on dealing with challenges and representations

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A positive response in Bradford

Barbour Logic correspondence and public interaction has liberated back office staff, says parking team

The City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council has been using specialist correspondence software to provide drivers contesting parking fines with prompt and clear responses. A team of 85 civil enforcement officers patrols the city and neighbouring towns and local areas. The authority issues over 100,000 penalty charge notices (PCNs) a year for parking, environmental and bus lane contraventions. Where drivers contest a PCN their challenges and representations are handled by an 11-strong back office team.

The council introduced Response Master, Barbour Logic's automated correspondence software solution, in 2015 to deliver greater consistency and accuracy when replying to letters about PCNs from drivers.

This subsequently led to the contract for Response Master being renewed earlier this year. The success of Response Master led, in 2016, to the authority agreeing to a separate trial of RM Self-Serve, a Barbour Logic solution that enables motorists to informally test out their planned challenge before deciding to send in a formal letter.

"Letters generated by Response Master are written in plain English, without any jargon and are very easy to understand," said parking services officer Anne Saville. "This has led to a huge drop in avoidable repeat contact from motorists. And, because Response Master is configured to reflect all of our policies, a consistent approach is assured in all cases."

"The introduction of a dedicated self-serve platform alongside this automated approach for writing letters has improved things even more. Our central contact centre now refers motorists to the easy to use online platform. Simplifying access to relevant information in this way has improved the customer journey significantly."

"We've developed a performance management programme to maximise efficiencies within the council's parking operation. It's not just about speed, though. The programme audits 10% of everything we produce and has shown very clearly just how much impact Response Master has had."

Providing motorists with prompt, clear responses is giving the parking services team more time to focus on other issues, said Michaela Hall, Bradford's assistant parking coordinator

"Response Master and RM Self-Serve have not only helped to overcome continuous administrative and operational fire-fighting, but also saved us a huge amount of time," said Hall. "We have seen a significant and sustained improvement in back office efficiencies and are saving around 300 hours a month."

"The introduction of an interactive 24/7 self-serve platform has helped to drive up



Barbour Logic MD Fiona Deans with City of Bradford's Michaela Hall and Anne Saville

customer service levels, and the time spent answering phone calls from frustrated customers has fallen by nearly 40%. Many motorists who visit our website to challenge their PCN choose not to, after getting advice from Self-Serve. Now running in tandem, the two systems have truly transformed our operation."

Hall said there has been a cultural change within her operation as a result of using the Barbour Logic technology. "The extra time that has been freed up has been put to very good use. Everyone in the team now has the scope to undertake special projects to further improve compliance levels and develop different aspects of our service."

"So far, the range of projects has covered everything from the management of car parks and the issue of waiver permits to the devel-

opment of a more user-friendly and informative website. This has improved motivation and career fulfillment for everyone in the team, while also helping us to push forward with exciting new service initiatives.

"As Response Master overcomes the dependency on input from more experienced members of the team, we are less vulnerable to performance shortfalls during staff holidays and sickness. And recruitment is a much easier undertaking as anyone can hit the ground running with minimal training and supervision, in stark contrast to three-to-six months of training and hand-holding required in years gone by."

The council's parking services team has now renewed the Response Master contract and issued a new contract for RM Self-Serve. Both contracts will run for two years.



A Bradford CEO checks a vehicle